

Is the Resurrection to Be Only of the “Responsible”?

by Raymond C. Faircloth

Most denominations who believe in a Pre-Millennial return of Jesus teach that all Christians are to be resurrected in the first resurrection and that the second resurrection, after the Millennium, will be for all of unbelieving mankind who have ever lived and died and it will be for their judgment. However, as far as we know, it is only the JW's and the Christadelphians, as well as their respective splinter groups, who have a limited view of who will be resurrected. However, the Christadelphians are even more limited in their view than the JW's inasmuch as they teach that only “the responsible” will be resurrected i.e. those who have heard the Gospel. So regarding resurrectional responsibility the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (*BASF*) of the Christadelphians stated:

That at the appearing of Christ prior to the establishment of the kingdom, the responsible (namely, those who know the revealed will of God, and have been called upon to submit to it), dead and living - obedient and disobedient - will be summoned before his judgement seat ... (Clause XXIV).

Also according to the Christadelphian (Amended View) publication *A Declaration of Truth*:

(17) At his return in power and glory Jesus Christ will judge all those who are **made responsible to him by knowledge of God's will**; these will include some living at the time, and those whom he raised from the dead, both righteous and unrighteous. He will invest the righteous with immortality in his kingdom, but will commit the wicked to destruction. ... (18) Without the knowledge of the saving Gospel men have no hope of life: but neither are they responsible to judgement; **their death will be an endless sleep**.

Furthermore, the 2006 book *Understanding the Bible* published by the Christadelphian Bible Mission stated on p.345:

At the end of the Millennium there is therefore another resurrection – this time of those who have **died during the thousand years**; and another judgement of those still living and those who died during the Millennium who have now been raised. This will give a final opportunity for the mortal population to become immortal.

Summarizing these statements, we understand the Christadelphian beliefs to be that:

1. Knowledge of the Gospel makes a man “responsible” to act upon what he has learned and therefore “responsible” so as to be judged by Christ.
2. It will be only those who had knowledge of God's will, through hearing the Gospel that will be “responsible” so as to be judged.
3. Therefore only “the responsible” will be resurrected, whether they accepted or rejected the Gospel.
4. So “the responsible” fall into two groups - “the righteous” and “the unrighteous.”
5. Both “the righteous” and “the unrighteous” will be resurrected as mortals.
6. The first resurrection of “the righteous” and “the unrighteous.” takes place at the one time of **the return of Jesus**.
7. After their judgement “the righteous,” both living and the resurrected, will be granted immortality.
8. After their judgement all “the unrighteous,” both living and the resurrected will be destroyed.
9. The second resurrection occurs **after the Millennium** and concerns *only those who died during the Millennium*.
10. Those who have no knowledge of God when they die before the return of Christ are permanently dead so that they are never resurrected.

NOTE: The even more limited view of those of the unamended Christadelphians is that it is baptism, rather than knowledge of the Gospel, which makes a man responsible to judgment. This means that all who were never baptized as Christadelphians will never be resurrected. However, baptized Christadelphians who fall away will be resurrected.

The corollary to these beliefs seems to be that, at the time Christ returns, only the living and the resurrected Christadelphians, having been judged worthy of immortality, and **all the living** who have not been classified as “the responsible” will live on the renewed Earth.

THE ISSUES RAISED

This pattern of beliefs raises several issues:

1. The key issue from these beliefs is: Is there justice if all those who are **not classified as “the responsible”** and who died before Christ’s return are **never to be resurrected** so as to have the opportunity to hear the Gospel?
2. What actually constitutes a hearing of the Gospel by a person?
3. Can *only* those who have rejected the Gospel be classified as “the unrighteous”?

By demonstrating from the Scriptures that the phrase “the righteous and the unrighteous” refers to **everyone who has ever lived**, and therefore the resurrection will be universal, this study proposes to answer these issues. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that there will be two occasions of resurrection separated by the 1,000 year Millennium of Christ’s rulership – the first occasion being for “the righteous” when Jesus returns before the Millennium and the second occasion being for “the unrighteous” after the Millennium has concluded.

Does God Really Exclude Some from Judgment?

In response to this teaching that only “the responsible” will be judged, it is immediately apparent that such a view is significantly more limited than the view of John the Baptist and that of the apostle Paul:

GOD DESIRES ALL PEOPLE TO BE SAVED

- ❖ “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who **desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**” (1 Tim. 2:3, 4 NKJB).

It is evident that God desires that everyone who hadn’t even heard the Gospel should be saved. So He desires that they should have a full opportunity to hear the Gospel.

THE SIN OF THE WHOLE WORLD IS ATONED FOR

- ❖ “...John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who **takes away the sin of the world!**” (John 1:29).
- ❖ “He himself is the sacrificial means for removing our sins and so restoring us to divine favour, yet not for our sins only but also **for the sins of the whole world**” (1 John 2:2 KGV).

Indeed Jesus atoned for the sins of everyone. This opened up the opportunity for them to believe and be saved. Whether they choose to be saved or not - the opportunity is there for them.

IGNORANCE - NO LONGER AN EXCUSE FOR NOT BEING JUDGED

- ❖ “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that **all everywhere** should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will **judge the world**” (Acts 17:30-31 NKJB).

So, in terms of classifying people as ‘the responsible’ so as to exclude from resurrection those who did not hear the Gospel, Paul said the very opposite of this Christadelphian teaching. Clearly God no longer overlooks ignorance of the Gospel because of one’s never hearing it - **all will be judged, including those who were earlier ignorant** of the Gospel.

Can *only* Those Who Have Rejected the Gospel Be Classified as “the Unrighteous”?

In answering this question it is evident that Paul meant **all who are not “in Christ”** are “the unrighteous.” This leads us to the conclusion that both Daniel (12:2) and Jesus (John 5:2) also viewed all, whether they had heard the gospel or not, as “the unrighteous” and so would be resurrected to face judgment.

IT WOULD BE AN INJUSTICE IF ALL OF THE WICKED ARE NOT JUDGED

Throughout history there have been vast numbers of evil men, such as Nero, Caligula, Ghenghis Khan, Attila the Hun, Tomas de Torquemada, Vlad Dracula (The Impaler), Elizabeth Bathory, Max Robespierre, Ivan the

Terrible, Talat Pasha, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Reinhard Heydrich, Adolf Eichmann, Hitler, Josef Mengele, Pol Pot, and other wicked dictators as well as vicious criminals who have perpetrated the most heinous crimes - many never having heard the Gospel - and who never received retribution from human justice. More importantly they were never brought to God's justice in their lifetimes for their wicked deeds. If it were not God's plan to resurrect these people they will never have answered for their wicked deeds. If however, they are to be resurrected and presented with the Gospel they would then have a chance to repent. So for there to be universal justice and judgment there will need to be a universal resurrection.

INJUSTICE TO PEOPLE WHO WERE IGNORANT OF THE GOSPEL

On the other hand, throughout history there have been millions of people who have lived relatively good lives and died, and yet without ever hearing the Gospel. This means that these ones never had any chance to become Christians. If these ones are never to be resurrected, this raises the issue of God's justice, especially because it also involves young children and babies, all of whom have never heard the Gospel and then will have died before Christ's return. If they are never to be resurrected so as to hear the Gospel this would deny them the opportunity to "choose life" and such cruelty in condemning them to permanent death would call into question God's love and justice. Yet, Christians know that God is completely just and so His decisions concerning those who died ignorant of the Gospel must be such as to give them a fair chance for life. This is not to say that dead children and babies would be resurrected to "immortal life," as in the first resurrection, but only that, having been resurrected and once old enough, they would have the choice to fully accept Christ.

The Resurrection Will Be Universal

After speaking of those who would be spiritually revived (John 5:25) Jesus spoke of those who would experience a literal physical resurrection that would be all encompassing when he said:

- ❖ "...an hour is coming when **all who are in the tombs** will hear his voice and come out, those who **have done good** to the [1] resurrection of **life**, and those who **have done evil** to [2] the resurrection of **judgment**"
(John 5:28, 29 ESV).

There is no contextual reason to imagine that the word "**all**" is not in the absolute sense. It means all who are in their graves, indicating all who have ever lived and died. **It does not mean "all...who hear his voice" as though some in the tombs will not hear his voice.** Here, as in many of his parables (e.g. Matt. 25), Jesus separates all people into only two groups: "those who **have done good**" and "those who **have done evil.**" Paul also separates all people into just two groups when he says in **Acts 24:15**: "...there is going to be a resurrection both of [1] *the righteous* and [2] *the unrighteous.*" (HCSB). This parallels the two destinies of resurrected ones described in Daniel 12:2, and Paul uses the term "*the righteous*" as meaning those who are approved by God because they are true Christians and have proved themselves worthy of receiving life of the age to come. So the term "*the unrighteous*" means those who are not true Christians having "**done evil.**" This category must, of necessity, include **all** those who have practiced even the most heinous of crimes throughout history against others – even though never having heard the Gospel - **and without regret or repentance.** Additionally, the Revelation tells us that:

- ❖ "The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works" (Rev. 20:13).

This language is of a total emptying of the graves so that none of the dead will be left unresurrected. Coupled with the fact that at the completion of the Millennium the resurrected dead will be "**the great and the small**" (Rev. 20:12) this further indicates that the resurrection of "the unrighteous" will be all encompassing of all who have ever lived and died.

NOTE: The Scriptures never teach that there will be universal salvation – commonly called Universalism. Resurrection of all does not mean the salvation of all. Furthermore, the biblical texts demonstrating a universal resurrection have sometimes been wrongly interpreted by Universalists as supporting the beliefs of Universalism. (Please see Volume 3, STUDY 8).

Answering the Arguments That Are Against a Universal Resurrection

1. From *Isaiah 43:17* it is argued that some will never wake up in the resurrection:

- ❖ “Who brings forth the chariot and horse, The army and the power (They shall lie down together, *they shall not rise*; **They are extinguished**, they are quenched like a wick):”

RESPONSE: This passage concerns God’s challenge to these military enemies, and simply refers to the inability of dead warriors to bring themselves back to life. This has nothing to do with future resurrection in God’s hands.

2. From *Isaiah 26:14* it is argued that those destroyed can never be resurrected because:

- ❖ “O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us ... They are dead, they will not live; they are shades [Heb. *rephaim* meaning “*shadowy ones*”], they will not arise; to that end you have visited them with **destruction** and wiped out all remembrance of them” (*Isa. 26:13, 14 ESV*).

RESPONSE: It is noted by professors of linguistics that *rephaim* is a particularly difficult Hebrew term to translate. It is typically rendered as “the departed spirits” or “the shades” or “dead ones” in most translations. However, this does not refer to the pagan teaching that, at death, a person’s spirit separates from his body. This is evident from verse 19 because it is impossible that “*the earth {the ground} will bring [disembodied spirits] to birth.*” So *rephaim* as “shades” does not refer to disembodied spirits.

At first glance it may appear that the phrase “will not rise up” means that these ones will never come to life again when the second resurrection occurs. However, the understanding of this passage is according to its context of poetic language in that particular time period. It is not directly that of future resurrection. So when *Isaiah 26:14* describes Israel’s defeated conquerors as “*shades that cannot rise*” it simply means that those particular individuals - those “other masters” - are **unable to bring themselves back from the dead** and therefore have ceased their oppressive rulership of Israel, never to return to power over Israel. They are now more like an ineffective shadow or shade because they are dead. So the Amplified Bible expresses the passage as:

- ❖ “O Lord, our God, other masters besides You have ruled over us, but we will acknowledge and mention Your name only. They [the former tyrant masters] are dead, **they shall not live and reappear; they are powerless ghosts (*rephaim*), they shall not rise and come back.** Therefore You have visited and **made an end of them** and caused every memory of them [every trace of their supremacy] to perish” (*Isa. 26:13, 14 Amplified Bible*).

Although “shades/shadows” would have been a better word choice than “ghosts” this passage still harmonizes with the fact that in verse 19 “*the earth will bring the shades (*rephaim*) to birth*” i.e. these “dead ones” or “shadows” will be resurrected as the prophecy says:

- ❖ “Your dead [*sons of Israel*] shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead [Heb. *rephaim* - “*shadowy ones*”]” (*Isa. 26:19*).

So verse 14 is not saying that these “former tyrant masters” (primarily the Assyrians) will never be remembered again by God so as to be in “*the resurrection of the unrighteous.*” But rather these words are an encouragement for Israel at that time, to cease fearing the return of “those masters” and to forget them and their harsh rulership because, being dead, they will never return to trouble Israel again – they are just mere shadows now. So this text also does not contradict the pattern Jesus established that “*all*” would be resurrected, as well as confirmed by Paul when he speaks of “*the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous.*”

3. *Jeremiah 51:39, 57* is used in the argument that some will never wake up in the resurrection because God says:

- ❖ “In their excitement I will prepare their feasts; I will make them drunk, That they may rejoice, And sleep a **perpetual sleep** And **not awake**,” says the LORD ...⁵⁷ “And I will make drunk Her princes and wise men, Her governors, her deputies, and her mighty men And they shall sleep a **perpetual sleep** And not awake” (*Jer. 51:39, 57 NKJV*).

RESPONSE: This is a clear allusion to Belshazzar’s feast on the very night Babylon fell to Cyrus. Although “sleep” is often used as a metaphor for being dead it also obviously refers generally to literal sleep. So the “**perpetual sleep**” from which [Belshazzar and his princes etc.] will “**not awake**” has nothing to do with resurrection, but simply that in falling asleep in their drunken stupor, after all their bragging, they would not wake up because they would be slain (Dan 5:30). And this is exactly what happened when Cyrus’ soldiers broke into Babylon, even though Belshazzar and his grandees didn’t even know that Babylon’s walls had been breached. So again this text also does not contradict either the pattern Jesus established that “**all**,” would be resurrected or Paul’s statement that it would “*be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous.*”

SUMMARY: These three passages of Isaiah 43:17; 26:14; and Jeremiah 51:57 are all qualified by their time frame, which is limited to this age and does not concern the age to come. So it is only within “this age” that those particular dead will never rise.

4. *1Thessalonians 4:13* is used to show that those who are not Christians have no hope of a resurrection:

- ❖ “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as **others who have no hope**” (*1Thess. 4:13*).

RESPONSE: Although this passage concerns the first resurrection (“the dead in Christ” vs. 16) and that the Christians are not to “grieve as **others who have no hope**,” this does not mean that, in God’s plan, there is no hope for dead pagans who have not heard the Gospel. Just because pagans thought there was no hope because they generally believed in a shadowy existence in the underworld does not mean that there is actually “no hope.” To Governor Felix, Paul said that he “*had hope in God...that there will be a resurrection of...the unrighteous.*” (Acts 24: 15) So **1Thessalonians 4:13** does not show that the reality is of no hope for pagans, but only that living pagans grieve because they feel that there is no hope.

5. The word “**many**” in *Daniel 12:2* appears to indicate a limited resurrection scenario:

- ❖ “**Many** (Heb. *rabbim*) of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, [1] **these** to everlasting life, but [2] **the others** to disgrace and everlasting (Heb. *olam*) contempt” (*Dan. 12:2 NASB*).

RESPONSE: The view of Jewish commentators Saadia Haggaoon (10th century) and Aben Ezra (12th century) on this passage was advocated by Bible translator S.P. Tregelles who rendered verse 2 as:

- ❖ “And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; **these** shall be unto everlasting life; **but those**, the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake *at this time*, shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt.”

So the **many** who will awake are “*these to everlasting life.*” But “*those, the others*” are not included in the many who will awake at that time. Their awakening comes later. This means that the main focus of this verse is on the first resurrection but still noting the second. Furthermore, the Hebrew Interlinear renders the Hebrew word *rabbim* for “many” as “**multitudes**” as does the NIV 2011. Similarly Young’s Literal Translation renders verse 2 as:

- ❖ “And **the multitude** of those sleeping in the dust of the ground do awake, some to life age-during, and some to reproaches - to abhorrence age-during.”

This indicates that Daniel is saying that **the vast number of people** sleeping in their graves will be resurrected, and he is not limiting this number. So regarding this translation issue *The New American Commentary Vol. 18 Daniel* says:

Baldwin justifiably contends that sometimes Hebrew *rabbim* (“multitudes”) may have the force of “all,” even though the word may mean “multitudes” (NIV) or “many” (KJV). In the first case the expression would speak of the fact that “all” will be resurrected. All persons will indeed be raised, even though there will be a period of time separating the resurrection of saints and unbelievers. The NIV’s “multitudes” would emphasize the great number who will rise from the grave...The NIV’s interpretation is probably best.

Yet even if Daniel was limiting the first resurrection for some reason, as for example because he had only faithful Israel in mind, it is Jesus who makes it plain that it will be a universal resurrection because he says that “**all who are in the tombs** will hear his voice and come out” and which he later elaborates upon when he gave the Revelation to John (Rev. 20:4, 5).

6. Psalm 1:5 in stating that: “*the wicked will not stand in judgment*” is said to mean that “the wicked will not stand up at resurrection time”

RESPONSE: However, in saying “*will not stand in judgment*” this text is really referring to the fact that the incorrigibly wicked won’t survive judgment. This is primarily because they will not have Christ as their advocate and so will stand condemned. So the text is not saying that such ones will not be resurrected after the millennium. Again there is no contradiction of Jesus’ words that “**all**” will come out of the tombs.

“*THE REST OF THE DEAD*” INCLUDES ALL ‘UNBELIEVING’ MANKIND.

By his using of the term **all** in John 5:28 Jesus was referring to the complete resurrection; firstly of the Christians and then “the rest of the dead” - and so must include everybody. Clearly because everyone must logically be either righteous or unrighteous, then **everyone who has ever lived will be resurrected**. The key difference concerns whether a person is resurrected to mortality or to immortality, as well as the fact that there will be two times of resurrection separated by the millennium as shown in the book of Revelation.

The Arrangement of the Resurrection “Of Life” and “Of Judgment”

RESURRECTION OF “THE RIGHTEOUS” AND “THE UNRIGHTEOUS” - IS NOT AT THE SAME TIME

The Christadelphian teaching is that the “righteous and the unrighteous” as “the responsible” because of having heard the Gospel (or having been baptized Christadelphians), will be resurrected at the same time, that is, when Christ returns. However, Jesus made a distinction when he showed that those having God’s approval would “*be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous*” (Luke 14:14). In this instance, he made no mention of “*the resurrection of the unrighteous*” and so indicating that “*the resurrection of the righteous*” is a separate resurrection to the one for “the unrighteous.” This first resurrection is of Christians, that is, “*He who believes in [Jesus].*” These will be resurrected “at the last day” as Jesus said to Martha concerning Lazarus that:

❖ “...everyone who observes the Son and puts his trust in him may have perfect life of the age to come, and I **will raise him up at the last day.**” (John 6:40 KJV).

THE TWO RESURRECTION EVENTS SEPARATED BY 1,000 YEARS

The resurrection of “the unrighteous” is a second resurrection which will not be “*at the last day*” because Daniel (please see Tregelles’ rendering of Daniel 12:2 above) and Jesus (John 5: 29), showed it to be a separate event – one that is separated from the first resurrection by a period of 1000 years, according to the book of Revelation.

Furthermore, Paul sought to “*attain to the resurrection from the dead*” (Phil. 3:11). He later stated that “*...there is going to be a resurrection of [1] the righteous and [2] the unrighteous*” (Acts 24:15). This harmonizes with what was said in Daniel 12:2, and by Jesus in John 5:28, 29, and later in **Revelation 20:4, 5** which gives further structure to the resurrection pattern:

❖ “[1] The first resurrection... [2] *The rest of the dead* did not live again **until** the thousand years **were finished**” (Rev. 20:5). ‘*First*’ implies a second resurrection and **Luke 14:14** mentions only: “...the resurrection of [1] the righteous.”

Because people can only be classed as righteous or unrighteous, **everyone will be resurrected** either at the time of Christ's coming immediately before the Millennium - in either resurrection [1], or a short while after the Millennium in preparation for the Great White Throne judgment - in resurrection [2].

Also, because the lake of fire (Gehenna) will not be operative for the first time until Armageddon (Rev. 19:20) every human who has ever lived and died is currently in "the tombs." Paul also explained the order in which the resurrection takes place:

- ❖ "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, **afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end**, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death" (1 Cor. 15:22-26 NKJV).

The fact that "*those who are Christ's*" i.e. Christians, are resurrected at the time of Jesus' arrival **excludes "the rest of the dead" until "the end."** So the destruction of death (1 Cor.15: 26) at **the end** of the Millennium is shortly after "*the rest of the dead coming to life*" in Revelation 20:5, 11-15 which then describes "*death and Hades [as being] hurled into the lake of fire*" (verse 14). Yet it is only from **Revelation 20:4, 5** that we learn that the two events are to be separated by 1000+ years. This separation of the two parts of the resurrection with a 1,000 year gap was well recognized by 2nd century Christians as noted in Justin Martyr's Dialog with Trypho when he said:

There was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation that was made to him that those who believed in Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and thereafter the general and eternal resurrection of all men would take place.

The Second Resurrection Is of All Those Who Died as Unbelievers

The second resurrection is often termed 'the general resurrection' and does not involve true Christians. Based on the above information concerning the statements from Daniel, Jesus, and Paul it will involve **not only those mortals who died during the Millennium** but all who died before Christ's return – his *parousia*. Not only is it second in time but also it is second in quality because unlike the resurrection of Christians to immortality these unbelievers can only be brought to life as mortals so that they may be judged.

A RESURRECTION TO MORTAL LIFE

Those categorized by Daniel, Jesus and Paul as "the unrighteous," "*who have done evil*," and who will wake up to "*disgrace and everlasting contempt*" must, logically, be given a resurrection of judgment as mortals. However, this "disgrace and contempt" do not last forever because the Hebrew word does not always mean *eternal* but rather it carries the meaning of *age-lasting*. Such a resurrection to mortality in "the natural" body will be the very same as that which Lazarus and others received from Jesus in the 1st century and was limited so that Lazarus and those ones eventually died.

This is not to say that such a person in the second resurrection cannot later be granted immortality. For some this must be the case, because the second resurrection is for the purpose of judging them and not for an instantaneous condemnation of them as some believe. So we are told that:

- ❖ "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. **And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.** The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And **anyone not found written in the Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:12-15 NKJV).

The judgement of these ones will be, not only according to their deeds prior to death, but according to the standards in "the scrolls." Because Jesus is the appointed way to salvation they must accept him and so whether they are thrown into the lake of fire or not will depend on their deeds in accepting Christ according to those scrolls, and so implying that there will be some in this latter resurrection who will then be written in the book of life and therefore granted immortality.

A FAULTY ARGUMENT

In an attempt to change the biblical pattern of the resurrection to a single occurrence of “*the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous*” at the return of Christ, the Christadelphian book *Wrested Scriptures* (p. 149) argues with reference to Revelation 20:5 that the phrase “*did not come to life again*” is a reference to eternal life because that is how the Greek word *zao* is used in Rev. 1:18; 4:10; 5:14; 10:6; and 15:7 and therefore Revelation 20:5 cannot be referring to the resurrection of the unrighteous.

RESPONSE: Although in certain contexts *zao* on its own may refer to the future perfect life, yet in all the above cited instances the word *zao* is qualified by *aionion* meaning “of the age” and so *zao* does not of itself mean *eternal life* but simply “life.” However, in Revelation 20:5 *zao* is not qualified by *aionion* and is not in a context of immortal life; so the argument that Revelation 20:5 cannot be referring to “*the resurrection of the unrighteous*” falls down.

Are Those in the Second Resurrection to Be Instantly Condemned?

Sometimes reference is made to Revelation 20:15 as proof that all who are in the second resurrection will simply be destroyed in the lake of fire. The passage says: “And **anyone not found written in the Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire” However, with reference to the second resurrection Bible scholar G.H. Lang asked the question:

Will there be saved persons at this judgment: Without hesitation we answer, Yes...The present passage states it, for it is only those whose names are not found in the book of life who are cast into the lake of fire. The form of the statement can really mean nothing less than that some names are found in that book: “If the name of any person was *not* (emphatic) found...he was cast, etc.” As I have written elsewhere, were it said of a great crowd at a railway barrier that if anyone was found *not* to have a railway ticket he was not allowed to pass, the unquestionable force would be that some had tickets. To mean the opposite the statement should be, “as their names were not found written...they were cast into the lake of fire.” Indeed the form of the statement, as applied to a crowd at a barrier, would mean practically that few were without a ticket and the many had one. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p.361.

So the implication of the very phrase in Revelation 20:15 is that some who will be in the second resurrection will be saved – even the majority. So the second resurrection is not a resurrection to *damnation* as the KJV wrongly translates the Greek, but is to judgment, which may hand down either a favourable or an unfavourable verdict. So those given a favourable verdict will not be destroyed in the lake of fire. This is strongly implied by the fact that those deserving of such second death after the Millennium are described as:

- ❖ “...the cowardly, **unbelieving**, abominable, **murderers**, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and **all liars** shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (*Rev. 21:8*).

So of those who are in the second resurrection it will only be gross sinners i.e., those in the above categories, including all who reject God and his arrangements, who are to be thrown into the lake of fire. And by more distant implication it appears that those who are given a favourable verdict would be granted immortality because in the *ultimate* “*new heaven and new earth*” kingdom “*there shall be no more death*” (*Rev. 21:4*).

The certainty is that this judgment will be just and merciful allowing resurrected ones time to adjust to all that they will then learn before a decision is made concerning their future.

With reference to Daniel 12:2, and depending on the context, the Hebrew word *olam* can refer to either a finite period of time (e.g. Jonah 2:6) or an indefinite period of time even “forever” (e.g. Psalm 102:12). In the case of Daniel 12:2 it must refer to a finite period of time because if it meant “everlasting” the unrighteous would be alive forever and would be forever being “reproached.” From the Bible’s conditional immortality position this would be impossible. So here we have an instance where *olam* refers to a finite period of time so that the “*unrighteous*” ones resurrected as mortals are given a probationary period of time so that they might learn and then accept Christ as lord. Those who accept Christ at the end of the probationary period of judgment will, no doubt, be granted immortal life. Those who do *not* accept Jesus at the end of that period will be thrown into the lake of fire.

The Lake of Fire (Second Death) Comes into Operation on Two Occasions

1). AFTER THE BEAST'S DEFEAT BEFORE THE MILLENNIUM

❖ “Then **the beast** was captured, and with him **the false prophet** ... These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone” (*Rev. 19:20*).

❖ “...at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels, with flaming fire, to mete out punishment on those who do not acknowledge God and on **those who refuse to obey the good news** of our Lord Jesus. They will pay **the penalty of destruction** from the face of the Lord and from his glorious power in the age to come” (*2 Thess. 1:7-9 KGV*).

2). AFTER THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

❖ “Now when the thousand years have expired, ... ¹⁰ **The devil**, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone ... And the dead were judged ... Then **Death and Hades** were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And **anyone not found written in the Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire” (*Rev. 20:7, 10, 13-15*).

It will not be all who are in the second resurrection who are thrown into the lake of fire.

Jude 7 does not disrupt this pattern of events:

“...as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, ... are set forth as **an example**, suffering the vengeance of **eternal fire**.”

Does this mean that these men were, at that ancient time, destroyed forever? No, because the Greek phrase for “*everlasting fire*” actually means **fire of the age to come**. That fire which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah was not everlasting but was similar to the supernatural punishment which God will first inflict at the return of Christ. Hence, Sodom and Gomorrah’s fire was **a type** of that total destruction yet to come. So, the destruction of these cities by fire cannot preclude a **resurrection for the people** of those cities. Furthermore, Jesus said that:

❖ “...it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city! [*i.e. any city that failed to show hospitality to Jesus’ disciples*]” (*Matt. 10:15*).

So the cities were an example and became a proverbial figure for total destruction by God. There are no statements in the Scriptures that the people of these cities would not get a resurrection.

However, as shown earlier the living wicked at the time of Jesus’ return are destroyed and hence are not in the 2nd resurrection, having already been thrown into the lake of fire. This includes the Beast and the False Prophet.

Misapplication of the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats

Matthew 25:31-46 is presented in the book *Wrested Scriptures* (p.149) as a proof that the resurrected righteous and unrighteous are judged at the same time and so there cannot be a resurrection of the unrighteous after the Millennium. However, in this parable Jesus does not speak of the resurrection, but speaks of the judgment of the living nations after Christ has returned. So the judgment upon both the righteous and the wicked, in this instance, **totally concerns the living** and has nothing to do with the resurrection.

Summary

Although there are other Scriptures which refer to or describe the resurrection, the key passages which show the pattern of the resurrection (who will be resurrected and when) are:

Daniel 12:2; John 5:28; 29; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:22-24; Revelation 20:4, 5; Luke 14:14; and John 11:24, 25.

1. THE RESURRECTION IS UNIVERSAL – BUT FOR TWO CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE

- ❖ “And many [Interlinear. *multitudes*] from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; [1] **these** shall be unto everlasting life; [2] **but those**, the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake *at this time*, shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt” (**Dan. 12:2** S.P. Tregelles).
- ❖ Jesus said: “...*all* **who are in the tombs** will hear his voice and come out, those who **have done good** to the [1] resurrection of life, and those who **have done evil** to [2] the resurrection of judgment” (**John 5:28, 29** ESV).
- ❖ “... a resurrection of [1] *the righteous* and [2] *the unrighteous*” (*Acts 24:15*).

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2. FIRST THE CHRISTIANS - BEFORE THE MILLENNIUM

- ❖ “You will be repaid at the resurrection *of the righteous ones*” (*Luke 14:14*).
- ❖ “...everyone who observes the Son and puts his trusts in him may have perfect life of the age to come, and I **will raise him up at the last day.**” (*John 6:40 KGV*).
- ❖ “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, **afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end**, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death” (*1 Cor. 15:22-26 NKJV*).

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3. THEN “THE REST OF THE DEAD” - AFTER THE MILLENNIUM

- ❖ “And they **came to life** and reigned with the Christ for a thousand years. ... ([2] The **rest of the dead** did *not come to life* **until** the thousand years **were completed**). This is [1] **the first resurrection**” (*Rev. 20:4, 5*).

Conclusion

The first resurrection will be at the time of Christ’s return and will be of all Christians, including those faithful people prior to Christ who anticipated the Messiah. The second resurrection will be to mortality and will occur a thousand years later. It concerns all those who died as non-Christians – whether they heard the Gospel or not before they died. Such a resurrection will give them an opportunity to hear the Gospel and accept Jesus as their lord. This arrangement demonstrates God’s manifestation of His love, patience and justice to all.